

# 310 KM. IN THE FAUVEL

by JACK H. LAMBIE

Do you ever feel a little foolish soaring? I did now.

Over 2 hours out on a Diamond C goal and return attempt of 192 miles and I was only 35 miles on my way and 18 miles south of my course! Around and around, like a buzzard, the Fauvel AV-36 flying wing circled in the weak lift that had plagued me so far. Out of sheer stubbornness, stupidity, or what I would like to call determination, I was going to work this thermal to the high cumulus — if it took me the rest of the afternoon. Maybe I was just being too conservative, but after the dismal distance flight attempt yesterday pushing on over cloudy and shaded mountains seemed a bit much.

At dawn of the Saturday morning of July 16th we had brought the wing up to El Mirage for an attempt to fly to Bishop for Diamond goal. John Aldrich of L.A. weather had predicted gentle southwest winds and lift to 13,000. Take-off was at 11:45 A.M. I snagged a good thermal for 9,400 asl right off tow. Two hours later we were only 25 miles out, and still struggling with a head/cross-wind. At 3:30 a landing was made at Red Mountain pass, only 50 miles, after a miserable flight. The landing was made in steady, strong downdraft on the lee of Red Mountain on a small uphill dirt road next to Hwy. 395. Since there were thick scrubby bushes and gulleys in the area I had landed by full stall onto the raised berm of the narrow road. By putting one wing down into the road and the other up over the bushes and pulling on full flaps just before touchdown, "hitting" a successful landing and stop was made in 25 paces.

Fred Matteson's crew had soon come up the road and reported that Mary, my crewchief and wife, was just a few miles behind so I sat at the edge of the road until she arrived. I often wondered what conversations ensued in the passing cars after seeing an individual in the middle of the desert sitting by the side of the road reading a book instead of hitchhiking. We cranked the ship up on the trailer and went back to El Mirage. Patches of clouds were scattered high over the San Bernardino Mountains and Victorville area until dark. All the way back to El Mirage those clouds had

indicated the way I should have gone. By the way, Fred made it to China Lake and Bert Wilkenson to Inyokern this day, not much farther.

The weather for Sunday was to be the same as Saturday, according to Irv Prue, so a goal and return of 192 miles, to 29 Palms and back, seemed to be a good bet. Gus Briegleb helped me fill out the declaration card properly, we sealed the barograph, four pictures of the card were taken to identify the film for the turnpoint pictures, and I climbed in. Mary was very hot and tired after getting me ready plus the very warm retrieve of the day before so I told her to take it easy in the pool or shade until I got back, hopefully around 6 P.M. She didn't think I would make it and wondered why it wouldn't be better to fly around locally. The Cinema and a TG-3A were struggling around quite low in obviously weak lift and I felt that Mary was probably right, but I was all ready so off I went at a very late 12:50 P.M. It felt good to be moving and in the air after those oven-like few minutes when the canopy is closed and the tow plane is hooking on. I had released at 1300 feet over the field in a small thermal that immediately disappeared. I headed for the Cinema and TG-3A, who were circling about a half mile south of me. At this instant, they left the thermal and headed back to the field. Nothing makes one feel more cheated when something like this happens! Finally the TG-3A paused and circled and I dove in underneath. By circling tightly and keeping the string in the middle of the canopy

up we went and the TG-3A gradually dropped below. The lift seemed to weaken and the TG-3A went back to the field. I moved down the road towards Adelanto and worked a weak thermal to about 6500' asl (3700' ag).

The wind was blowing gently from the northwest which kept the sea air from moving up through the Cajon Pass. This sea air not only can form shearline lift, but also destroys any thermals in the pass area. I headed directly southeast toward the San Bernardino Mountains which already had a nice cumulus cloud cover. It seemed strange going over the area I had always avoided, but little thermals presented themselves frequently. Lift was weak and narrow and I spent a half hour over Hesperia airport climbing very slowly for the dash to the clouds near the mountains. Finally we were under the clouds but things were no better. We headed close up to the northwest side of the mountains and soared slope currents and little thermals to Lake Gregory where a refuse fire was sending its smoke drifting up to the clouds far above. The ground here is 6000' asl and I was 1500 to 2000 feet over the lake climbing at 200 feet per minute.

So here we are 35 miles on my way and over two hours out. Around and around and around and around. The Fauvel circles very nicely, thank goodness. When one flies into the core or out of the edge of a thermal the Wing doesn't make a big stall and require stick movements to keep circling, she simply pitches, kind of like a rocking chair, and keeps plugging around. At increasing altitude the lift got better and better until it was winding up the altimeter at over 1000 feet per minute. As 18,000' asl

The author, his wife and crew chief Mary, and his Fauvel AV-36 flying wing sailplane where it came to rest after the flight of July 16th.

Photo: Mike Lambie

